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ABSTRACT

International public relations continues to be a rare experience in most public relations curriculums, but courses are found in journalism and business. The emphasis, however, is slightly different. Business departments emphasize international economic principles to be supported by public relations, whereas journalism stresses issues management and public information policies in multinational corporations/organizations. A new model has been developed which incorporates the international perspective into a public relations curriculum if constraints will not allow a specialized course. Internship experiences as well as textbook choice can provide an ongoing international public relations experience. Lastly, there remains a large international concern about the uses of public relations in the international arena. Practitioners who are insensitive to multicultural needs and cultures that do not uphold the public relations principles are two concerns. This area needs to be addressed fully and most certainly in an international arena. (Two tables and one diagram are included.) (SG)

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Toward More Emphasis in International Public Relations Research and Education: A USA Perspective

by

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Panel: The Role of International Public Relations in Academia: A Comparative Focus on European and USA Approaches to Curriculum and Research

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Toward More Emphasis in International Public Relations

Research and Education: A USA Perspective

An earlier review of 3,201 university and college catalogs (1987-1988 editions) covering 50 states yielded 578 undergraduate departments teaching public relations course's.[1] The departments offering public relations courses(s), in order of highest frequency, represented communication(s), journalism, business, interdisciplinary (combinations of departments), mass communication, miscellaneous (those few departments that cannot be classified in the categories listed here), and public relations.[2]

A total of 1,265 public relations courses were taught by the 578 departments. First, by using the more stringent guidelines of the 1987 commission study (joint survey conducted by Public Relations Society for America (PRSA) and Association for Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) for identifying courses, the catalog data was selected by using the model commission standards. The commission standard on course descriptions states that only those courses which specifically mention "public relations" in the title or course description qualify as public relations courses. The commission report stated that "courses qualified for classification if the course title or course descriptions were "'clearly identifiable as public relations courses'".[3]

The low ranking of international public relation as the last nonrequired area for a model public relations curriculum reflects, again, little support for international public relations education. The five-course model curriculum excludes international pubic relations. A sixth recommended area includes a variety of possibilities and mentions international public relations as one, but rated as the last option. Below the results of the academic-practitioner survey lists the areas of specialization:

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

(Sixth Course--Advanced Level)

6.43	publicity and media relations
6.01	community relations
6.00	employee relations
5.71	consumer relations law
5.29	financial relations
5.26	public affairs/lobbying
4.93	fundraising/membership development
4.50	international public relations

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So the model public relations curriculum recommended by the 1987 joint commission of PRSA and AEJMC does not strongly recommend an international public relations perspective.[4]

The Identification of International Public Relations Courses

In the United States few public relations courses have an international focus. Seven international public relations courses were identified in the study reviewing the catalogs for courses offered at colleges or universities. Courses labelled as international broadcasting or international communication did not have a public relations emphasis and were excluded from the study.

International public relations curriculum outside the the United States will be covered by non US scholars. Two major scholars in international public relations commented that international public relations is not frequently found abroad either.

However, the American experience demonstrates the global togetherness has arrived. For example, in my last site visit to a consulting client in the Midwest, I was told that the Japanese ran the local industry for metal parts, the Japanese had bought the local John Deer plant, and the local meat sales center was now owned by the Australians. While countries outside of the U.S. have felt for many years the American influence, the U.S. is fast becoming a mixed ownership or blend of international influence. Note the foreign investments in billions of dollars here in the U.S. in the following chart.[5]

Who Owns Los Angeles? About 64 percent of the real estate in downtown Los Angeles is owned by foreigners, much of it by people in Tokyo, London, Bonn and Toronto. So is 39 percent of Houston, as well as a third of the office space in Minneapolis. Increasingly, the towering buildings that form the familiar skyscapes of our cities are being purchased by foreign investors who have benefited from the slumping U.S. dollar.

States actually bid against one another—offering incentives and subsidies—to attract foreign investors. Below is a breakdown, in billions of dollars, of foreign-owned plants, property and equipment in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, as of 1986.

Texas	$40,324,000,000	Oklahoma	5,172,000,000	Kansas	2,158,000,000
California	37,017,000,000	Colorado	4,881,000,000	New Mexico	2,132,000,000
New York	18,016,000,000	Minnesota	4,442,000,000	Hawaii	2,013,000,000
Alaska	15,134,000,000	Massachusetts	4,038,000,000	Oregon	1,671,000,000
Louisiana	13,562,000,000	Arizona	4,006,000,000	Montana	1,597,000,000
Illinois	11,057,000,000	Kentucky	3,959,000,000	Iowa	1,555,000,000
New Jersey	10,608,000,000	Alabama	3,586,000,000	Maine	1,373,000,000
Ohio	9,530,000,000	Missouri	3,487,000,000	District of Columbia	1,362,000,000
Florida	9,487,000,000	Washington	3,398,000,000	North Dakota	1,362,000,000
Pennsylvania	9,293,000,000	Wisconsin	3,187,000,000	Nevada	1,101,000,000
Georgia	8,611,000,000	Indiana	3,153,000,000	Arkansas	1,148,000,000
North Carolina	8,270,000,000	Maryland	2,931,000,000	New Hampshire	764,000,000
Michigan	7,272,000,000	Delaware	2,901,000,000	Rhode Island	474,000,000
South Carolina	5,744,000,000	Wyoming	2,849,000,000	Vermont	454,000,000
Virginia	5,529,000,000	Utah	2,620,000,000	Nebraska	400,000,000
West Virginia	5,261,000,000	Mississippi	2,416,000,000	South Dakota	393,000,000
Tennessee	5,192,000,000	Connecticut	2,381,000,000	Idaho	382,000,000

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Most likely the international mix of business and industry brings more demands for global public relations services.

Content Analysis of the International Public Relations courses.

The departments offering international public relations are those with journalism and business orientations and in most cases the course is simply titled International Public Relations and offered for 3 hours of credit. The organizational references for the Journalism perspective focused on national and supranational governmental units and multinational corporations/organizations. Business departments referred to the PR practices of American businesses in other countries, practices of overseas operations, multinational entities, and listed a variety of specific focuses such as foreign market research, international trade principles, and international economic principles and policies. The business focus is clearly emphasized.

Offered on both the undergraduate and graduate level, the international public relations courses had prerequisites which varied. For business the prerequisite was either marketing, advertising, or the principles of public relations course. Journalism required a case studies course in one instance and no requirement in another listing.

The public relations emphasis varied more between the two disciplines. Journalism mentioned "public information policies", the "technical and culturally affected communication" and "issues management in cross-cultural situations". Most importantly the "public relations strategies in multinational environments" is stated.

Business departments looked for "problems of public relations in international affairs" and "case studies of public relations practices". "Public relations strategies for managing decision making for business industry, institutions, organizations . . . ." included the idea of fact finding, planning and evaluating public relations programs. The communication challenges because of differences such as language, moral, economic, education, and social, were outlined in the course description. Note that in the business departments ethics are identified as morals.

Model of Global Public Relations Being Taught Without an International Public relations Course.

Often a public relations major is competing with other majors and there are curriculum constraints. For example, at my university there is not an international public

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relations course. There are two reasons for my international public relations interest: 1) the area I live in is a gateway to international business and social mix, 2) the area I live in is very multicultural, and 3) my life-long interests have pursued international and multicultural emphases. The last point, my personal life-long interests in the international perspective, is the force that creates the emphasis in international public relations.

So my outlet for international public relations, although a specific course is not on the books, is through the internship. First, the preparation for the international public relation internship experience is through the careful integration of multicultural and international experiences in the public relations sequence, including the selection of textbooks.[6] The preparation includes specifically:

1. Selection of textbooks with an International Public Relations Emphasis. In interviewing public relations professors about textbook choices for their classes, Seitel's The Practice of Public Relations is often mentioned. However, the textbook is often selected for readability and interest (students are not bored) and for the practical orientation to the public relations profession. The text is not selected because of its extensive and most rare inclusion of international public relations. However, this was a major criteria of mine. Most public relations textbooks will list international organizations or mention the international media network but few textbooks discuss, in depth, the international aspects as fully as Seitel while retaining the readability and practical orientation. The students are given an international perspective in public relations beyond a listing of organizations or media networks that have an international public relations orientation.[7]

2. Visual Communication Training which Emphasizes the Multicultural. In the computer graphics course, students are made familiar with multicultural aspects of their visuals, whether print or art. Examples of how different cultures "see" concepts or the differences in word meanings (often an error in advertising) are covered.

3. Bilingual Assignments. Because of the cultural diversity of the area, classes are a mix of many cultures. Easily one person per project team can be assigned to producing materials bilingually. Slidetape presentation are produced both in Spanish and English, for example. Here the students become sensitive to the complexity of cultural diversity. Spanish, for example, can be Puerto Rican, Mexican, South American or European Spanish. All these dialects are very different. Selecting a dialect generally acceptable is a skill in itself.

4. Coordination with International Program in Foreign Languages. Often a resource for the public relations program is the international foreign language program. Students from this area are encouraged to become involved in

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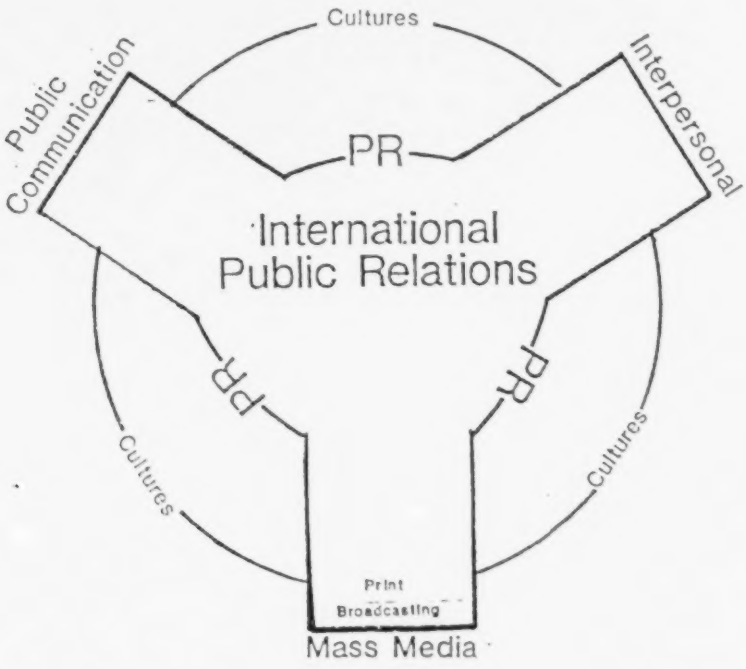
public relations as a double major or a minor. This relationship strengthens the international focus in public relations and students network with the foreign language students on public relations projects.

Multicultural Interpersonal Training Integrated in Public Relations Sequence Courses. Besides the public relations course in computers graphics and the internship course, the first two public relations courses, introductory and advanced, are both oriented toward international public relations. Seitel's textbook is used with the international chapter being supplemented with other multicultural materials. Students are asked to become aware of the interpersonal differences in cultures and exercises are provided. Practicing public relations with different cultures requires a variety of skills most Americans do not practice and often those from a foreign culture need to appreciate those of another culture. The primary areas of international training include: nonverbal (space), different meanings of words, interpersonal expectations in introductions, differences in ethical considerations, and the unique practices of public relations in each country. I introduce my public relations multicultural model based on the different channels of communication. This model which serves as a communication based model is reproduced here as an overview of the international public relations perspective.[8]



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Secondly, internships offering an international public relations experience are available to students. Not all students can handle international public relations experiences but with over 100 majors enough students could be placed. Examples of international public relations internship position created include:

INTERNATIONAL PORT AUTHORITY. In Northwest Indiana there is an International Port Authority which in the past year has been given Foreign Zone Designation, an important status which allows major international ships to come to port. The International Port at Burns Harbor competes successfully with Chicago.

The international public relations internship focuses on graphics, interpersonal communication, and media. The students have developed an international logo and other related symbols for the port's stationary and publications. Television and radio ads were created using these graphics. The students are expected to develop local political support for the port, including open houses for local political figures and tours for critical audiences. Meanwhile, the interpersonal needs of the people coming in by ship had to be met. Besides finding the type of food different ship crews requested, the complexities of using our mailing and telephone systems to communicate back home were awesome. In one day the crews could represent cultures as diverse as Africa, Russia, Arabic, Swedish, or British. Many public relations skills were demanded at this internship site.

AGENCY. Internships started with major Chicago public relations agencies were not initially oriented to international public relations. Obviously, the employees handled these accounts. However, in three cases my students have been hired by major agencies as account executives in Chicago and St. Louis and consequently have had to deal with international public relations. For example, one student who is now a senior account executive with the 7th largest public relations firm in Chicago, is attracting international accounts one of which is Yardley of England. The former student's preparation in international public relations will be an advantage here and prepares her for demands that were not initially part of the job.

NONPROFIT GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. Interns serving with nonprofit governmental agencies will be serving a variety of multicultural audiences in Northwest Indiana. Brochures and video productions are produced not only in English but in Spanish. Here the connection between the foreign language program and public relations becomes particularly valuable. These students with both sets of skills are valuable to public relations for regional development, economic development, and social services. The knowledge of a foreign language is required.

With no specific international public relations course, programs can integrate the multicultural and international perspectives. In fact, public relations educators may be remiss if international public relations is not integrated.

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Our global closeness demands an international public relations perspective.

Ethics: A Confusing Element for the Teaching of International Public Relations.

Two aspects of ethics are of concern to the public relations professional. How widely shared these views are among public relations practitioners is not established in this paper. One area of ethical concern focuses on public relations as directed by public relations professionals who refuse to be sensitive to the multicultural dimension and impose the American view. Secondly, an equally noted concern regarding the teaching of public relations to internationals who do not share the cultural principles espoused in public relations.

Insensitivity. Public relations in the hands of professionals who ignore or are insensitive to other cultures should not be allowed. In fact, the concern is so great that some have posed the question: should international public relations be taught? Should we encourage international public relations when there is a chance for great misuse?

Note that by avoiding the teaching of international public relations the problem does not go away. As stated earlier, more and more internationals have an invested interest in the U.S. and investment abroad continues at a fast rate. People will demand more and more international public relations services and not to have people trained may create more of a problem. Perhaps what is missing is a strong ethic and a strong curriculum commitment to a sound multicultural perspective; a perspective which strongly clarifies for the students the best use of public relations under international considerations.

A second major ethical concern, however, focuses on a reason for slowing down the rate of international public relations or at least approaches international public relations from a variety of viewpoints. In some cultures this knowledge can be lethal. For example, recently a professional who has taught in many countries abroad recounted an incident where use of public relations was a life threatening experience.

In the American culture we tolerate diversity of expression. In other cultures diversity of expression is not allowed. Teaching public relations, particularly the use of the media, without the appreciation of the principles of public relations led to the death of his student.

> A public relations student in another country put forth a media piece which was not supported by the current regime. Soon after the newsrelease was produced by the media, army troops arrived. The student was stripped of his clothes and chased for three hours by trucks in the studio parking lot. When the student was exhausted

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> and fell, the trunks ran over him until he was pulp. The lesson learned: public relations cannot be used for questioning those in authority.[9]

Perhaps these areas need to be discussed in an international arena. Certainly more awareness of the potential landmines in teaching international public relations should be addressed. Perhaps this reflects the growing pains of international public relations and that the area of ethics is the last area to be addressed, if accepted.

SUMMARY

International public relations continues to be a rare experience in most public relations curriculums but courses are found in journalism and business. The emphasis, however, is slightly different. Business departments emphasize international economic principles to be supported by public relations, whereas, journalism stresses issues management and public information policies in multinationals.

The model proposed here suggests strongly that the international perspective can be incorporated into a public relations curriculum if constraints will not allow a specialized course. Internship experiences as well as textbook choice can provide an ongoing international public relations experience.

Lastly, there remains a large ethical concern about the use of public relations in the international arena. Practitioners who are insensitive to multicultural needs and cultures which do not uphold the public relations principles are at least two major categories. It is recommended that this area needs to be addressed fully and most certainly in an international arena.

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